

**Funding Parks and Libraries in University City
Council President Scott Peters, First District
For the Golden Triangle News**

The transition to a “strong mayor” form of government in San Diego changed many of the ways the city does business, including how we write and approve a budget. Prior to this year, the city manager presented a budget to the City Council, which had few opportunities to thoroughly research or significantly alter it.

We now have an opportunity to do things differently, in a way that is transparent and allows for maximum public input. Under our new form of government, the city’s Chief Financial Officer and his staff create a budget for the mayor, who delivers it to the council for deliberation. The council looks to the Independent Budget Analyst and her staff to analyze the mayor’s budget and make recommendations. Six public hearings have been held to allow the public to direct their questions and comments to the council on important neighborhood programs and city services. After considering all of the input from the public and the budget analyst, the City Council will present its final budget to the mayor, who can approve or veto them. The council will have the final say on the 2007 budget this June.

There is a great concern among residents of University City that the budget cuts being considered by the city will further reduce maintenance and hours of operation at our parks and libraries. I am proud to announce that the City Council has been successful in working with the Mayor and Independent Budget Analyst to preserve the current levels of maintenance at all of the parks, recreation centers, beaches and libraries in University City. The library will remain open for 41 hours per week, and the assistant site director position for our parks in University City will be retained, allowing recreation center hours at Doyle and Standley parks to remain the same next year.

When the city builds new facilities, it is important to provide for the ongoing operations and maintenance costs in each year’s budget. Fortunately the new budget provides funding for the Nobel Park and North University branch library project, currently under construction along Nobel and Judicial Drive. This 30-acre park and library site, including athletic fields, passive recreation areas and a children’s play area, will open this coming January.

Keeping public pools open in District One is a priority, and I know how important it is to the residents and families in University City. Unfortunately, there was not enough in the budget to fund all of our needs. Swanson Pool is one of nine city pools scheduled to close for three months next year. This past year I was able to find money to keep the pool open for two of those three months. I don’t think it’s fair to allow some pools to remain open all year again, while others face closures two years in a row. I will continue to fight for a plan for the future funding of priorities like Swanson pool, and Friday and Saturday library hours.

I want to thank all of the community members that contacted my office during the recent budget hearings. While this budget does not fund all of the programs I feel are important, it spares the community from more painful cuts. I am hopeful that as the city emerges from its current challenges and our revenues continue to grow, we can restore funding to the neighborhood services you rely on, such as parks and libraries.